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A MEDITATION OF Life and Death.

Tranſlated with ſome Alterations out of the works of the Learned and Ingenious

Euſebius Nierembergius.

——Agnoſcere ſolis
Permiſſum eſt, quos jam tangit vicinia fati
Victuroſq; dii celant, ut vivere durent,
Fælix eſſe mori—— Lucan. *lib.* 4. *pag.* 103.

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A

MEDITATION

OF

Life and Death.

HUMBLY DEDICATED
TO
Madam, F. N.

Madam,

THO it may seem an unpardonable peice of impertinence, to present a Meditation of Life and Death to a person, whose whole life (as appeares by your Angelical conversation) is nothing else, yet since it is a subject of such importance that it can never be too much, or too often thought on, I thought

it might not be altogether unacceptable to add Meditation to Meditation; especially since in this I was sure to hit your serious humour, and entertain you with a dish of your own liking. Life *and* Death, *tho two of the most common* things, *are yet none of the commonest* Subjects *in the world. For I believe generally nothing is less thought of, and perhaps for no other reason but because they are so common. I dare not promise you any thing new here, perhaps I might another, but you I dare not. However I hope you will not blame the barrenness of the Author, but impute it to the excess of your own thoughtfulness, the* Anticipation

of your Closet. For my own part I was so pleased with a great many sententious Remarks and pithy expressions, which occur in this Discourse, that I thought I might without any Prodigality of time, employ two daies in the Translation of it. But if the product of two daies study can afford you one hours entertainment, I shall think my time could never have been better spent. But not to detain you any longer from these, or your own more weighty Meditations, I take my leave of you, with this real and unfeigned protestation, that I am

Madam,

Your most humble
and devoted Servant

A MEDITATION OF Life and Death.

LIFE in the opinion of moſt men is the greateſt good, and Death the greateſt evil. But they are in this, as in other matters of greateſt concern moſt miſtaken. For rather Life is the greatſt evil, if we don't live well; and Death the greateſt good, if you don't dye ill. Neither can you dye ill, unleſs you live ill. Life if it be not good does but unfold a larger ſcene of Vice and miſery; Death if not evil, puts a period

period to all evil. That wicked men think amiss of Death, is no more a wonder, then that a vitiated Palate, distelishes the sweetest Hony. If it be evil, 'tis to them only who have made it so by an ill Life. There is not one sufficient reason why we should hate Death, but many, why we should desire it. Whether we consider it alone, or with its attendants. Whether we consider the evils from which it frees us, or the good into which it instates us. If we consider that it is not evil in it self, may that it is good. Or suppose it were an evil, which would not counterpoise the good which it brings, or were in not good that would hold no proportion with the evil it removes. I know nothing in Life considerable besides an tumultuous throng of calamities, whose very multitude overwhelms our fear, and which have this only wretched Lenitive to make them tolerable, their own commonness, and daily in

curfio

curſion. Twas the opinion of *Orpheus* that Life was the puniſhment of Souls, and ſuch a one to, whereby the Living were commenſurately bound faſt to the Dead. The latter part at leaſt is true, for by Life the pure and eternal Soul is Wedded to a Groſs and Corruptible Body. Should God on a ſuddain with his Almighty *Fiat* ſpeak a man into Being, endow'd with a free and perfect uſe of his thoughts, and give him an entire proſpect of all Mankind, he would no ſooner caſt about his Eyes, but he would meet with ſome miſerable objects, which would call for his fears. Either he would ſee ſome Blind, or ſome Maim'd, ſome Lame, ſome Begging, ſome Decrepit, ſome Languiſhing, ſome Quarrelling, ſome commiting Murther, ſome Mad, and almoſt all, Weeping. And could he look into the inſides, he would find all tormented with Deſire and Diſcontent. Surely ſuch a diſmal Scene of things would

make

make him repent of his newly receiv'd Being, and fall in love with annihilation. And therefore cunning Nature doth leasurely and thriftily dispence the use of reason to Mankinde, that we might not startle at the suddain appearance of evils, but by custome might be brought to bear them with less impatience.

A peice of policy much like that of the Emperor, Who Cloister'd up his Son from his Infancy in a Magnificent Apartment, and to keep him unacquainted with the condition of Mankind, took care that he should never see nor hear any mirerable object That no Poor, Diseased, or Old man, should ever come in his sight and that nothing should be said, or done, but what was highly pleasing and acceptable. A vain project to think to keep out Grief with Cloisters and Walls, to shut the Gate of the Palace against Melanchaly, when the dore of Life stood wide open. The very

very diversions themselves were an inlet to Sadness, and Melancholy crept in through the Satiety and Fatigue of pleasure. Change is so much an Ingredient of all Human delight, that an uninterrupted state of Joy occasions sadness. Certainly tho the Emperor could keep off all miseries from the *Sight* of his Son, yet he conld not from his *Mind*; and tho he could secure him from other calamities, yet he could find no preservative against desire. His Son began to long and grow sad in an *Elysium* of pleasures. And what do you think 'twas he desired? Not to live so pleasantly. He began to complain of the tediousness of his too indulgent fortune, and Petitioned the Emperor to uncloister him from his wretched happiness. A Petition which put his Father to a great streight, who for fear of giving offence to his Son, was fain to alter his resolution he had made, never to displease him. He consented to his

liberty

liberty, but withal took special care that no sad object might come in his way. He gave order that all Blind, Deform'd, Maim'd, Poor, and Old men should be remov'd far off, but alas when was diligence so fortunate as to conceal all miseries? They are so numerous that they cannot be hidden much less quite taken away. Power was here unable to contend with humane infirmity, which in spite of the Emperors endeavours, discover'd itself. 'Twas the fortune of the young man to light upon a Blind Cripple and a Leper. He startled, and stood amazed at the strange spectacle, as if he had seen an Apparition. He asked what it was? And when he knew that these were the fruits of humane Life, he had his antidote against all the pleasures of it, and took a disgust against Life it self. And that he might have as little of it as was possible, where fortune had possession of the greatest part; he presently re-

nounc'd

canounc'd, if not his Life, yet the hope of
h, or what is with many of equal value,
in is Crown and Dignities. He took
me anctuary at that which is moſt like
la Death, obſcurity and privacy, where
s he might enjoy ſecurity at leaſt, if
not ſafety. Now if from ſuch a ſmall
id occurrence he took ſuch a diſguſt at
we life, what would he have done, had
he took a general ſurvey of the world,
th had been preſented with a Scene of
d Mortality, Charnel-houſes, Sculs, Dead
un Bones and Worms? Had he ranſackd
le all the corners of the earth, and ſeen
oo thoſe ſordid Foundations, on which
a life is built, the dedication of our
sk miſery celebrated by the pangs of the
ne Mother, and the tears of the Infant.
an What if he had look't into our bed
& al Chambers and breaſts? He would
gu have ſeen us in Tears, Deſires and
h loathings; one bewailing his Wife,
ſſi another his Children, one hungry,
i another ſurfeited, one carking for
re neceſſaries, another uneaſy under
ac'd ſu-

superfluities. What if he had seen no house without some misfortune in it? What if he had seen all that were Wracked with the Gout, Stone and other Maladies? What if he had seen all that Languish under Sickness all that were distracted with Cares all that were discomposed with desires? This certainly would have prejudiced him against Life, against the World where we so die in miseries and miseries live in us. How glad would he have been to hear of a way of setting himself once more at liberty! I fancy he would extol Death as the best invention in the World.

Suppose a man were hedg'd round with a circle of Wild Beasts, he saw a Tigre rushing upon him there a Lyon putting forth his Paw to devour him, and in an other place a Venemous Serpent hissing at him what would not this man give to purchase a freedom from this assembly of

miſchiefs? what happineſs would he think greater then to be reſcued from ſo many dangers? and will it be a leſſe to be ſnacht from greater evils? we are environd with moſt furious and impetuous paſſions, and at all ſides aſſaulted with misfortunes. We are in the midſt of a whole Ring of Evils. Some we feel, and fear all. Now we have but one Sanctuary from all theſe evils, and that's Death.

Were it not for this, there would be no end of our miſeries. How comes it to paſs then, that we dread that which is recommanded to us by as many Endearments as there are Celamities in Life. One would think danger were enough to recommend ſecurity. And there is no other beſides Death.

And therefore *Socrates*, after he had took his Deadly Draught offer'd a Sacrifice to *Æſculapius* the God of Phyſick, acknowledging Death to be the Catholick Medicin for all Maladies.

I think one of the most rediculous things *Xerxes*, ever did in his Life, and which well deserved the repreof of *Artabanus*, was when having a prospect of his Numerous Army from an high Hill he Wept, to think that within the compass of an Hundred years they should be all dead and gon. He thought it seems, 'twas pitty Men should die so soon. But I think he had more reason to lament the slow process of that Funeral which is usher'd along with an age of miseries. Without question if from his high Station he had seen human infelicity as well as Men, he would have dry'd up his Eyes at the remembrance of that universal remedy; Death, neither would he have feard that, which takes away all that is to be fear'd. That can be no evil. Which is the only deliverance from evil. Should those who have tried both Life and Death be put to the question which

the

hey would chuſe, either to reenter
pon that, or to continue in this.
one would chuſe Life but thoſe
ho were moſt unworthy of it, thoſe
ho lived ill. But as for thoſe who had
d a good Life, they would never
pent of Death, or deſire to return
Life again, which they would dread
ore now they were dead, then they
d Death when they were alive.
is ſaid of *Stanislaus*, a Man of
eat Integrity and Conſtancy, that
gave one the Option of Life or
ath, who told him he had rather
again then live again. So that one
fe was enough to Cloy him, whereas
ath would endure a ſecond trial.

If Souls Subſiſt as *Origen*, *Plato*,
rmes, and many of the antient Phi-
ſophers would fain make us believe
fore their Impriſonment in the
omb, one would think they ſhould
auſeat their putrid and narrow con-
ement, where they are almoſt Sti-

fled in Seminal impurities, and mat
rial Concretions. Especially if
should be told them that they must
mued up 9 Months in this dark P
son, and then above Ten years mo
in the darkness of ignorance and e
rour. Add to this. If they knew
many Labours and Hardships th
were to undergo, wherein they wo
tast the miseries of Life before th
knew what it was to live. The Infa
serves an Apprentiship of misery fr
the very Cradle. The avoidance
Hunger makes him breake Prison
the first. He goes out according
Hippocrates, to Seek his living abr
when there is a dearth of provisio
home. And then falls out of one
sery into an other, which is wo
What if he could peep out throug
Crany of his Prison, and see all
Miserable, Languishing and Decre
Wretches that are in this great H
pital the World? He would s
back from the sight of so many e

m

much leſs hazard the enduring of them. *Plato* aſcribes the ſuſpenſion of reaſon in Infancy, and the errone-puſneſs and ficleneſs of Youth, to that Conſternation and fright which ſeiſes the Soul at the inſtant when ſhe is thrown down from her Orb of light into this Vale of miſery, this dark uncooth Dungeon of the World and the Body. Again what if he knew that the moſt lightſome and pleaſant part of his Life was moſt ſubject to tears, and that the flower of his age muſt wither in perpetual vexation, that he muſt always live in a ſlaviſh dread of the Rod, and have his moſt fiery jubilees ſour'd and allaid with the awe of a Schoole-maſter? Again what if he knew that that part of Life, which is moſt deſired is moſt Calamitous?

Multa ſenem fragilis vexant incõmoda carnis.
Nam macie turpi tabeſcunt languida membra
Hunc Genuum juctura riget venaſq; per omnes
Illius in toto frigeſcit Corpore Sanguis.

Sic

Sic baeculo nitens artus sustentat Inermes
Quid tristes memoreẽ gẽitus? quid tædia menti
Somnus abest oculis——

Add to this the train of diseases which then troop in togather. For old age is the Sink of Life. Here is a Stagnation of all filth. The Autumn of our Life is the Spring of our Infirmitys. Well may the Old man stoop when his burthen is so great. But I think Nature deals kindly with us in this, that she banishes all pleasure from Old age, and summons in griefs of all Sorts. That so we may be the more willing to quit the Stage, and after the heat and toil of a tedious day to refresh our selves in the shades of Death. What a deep Tragedy now is Life, which begins and ends in miserie? I now no longer wonder at *Isis* for saying in his Sacred book that the Souls were all in Sadness when they understood they were Condemned to enter Bodies. Αἱ δ' τότε πρῶτον ςυγνάσασ

κατ

κατακρίτους ἑαυτὰς μάθουσαι, saies he. And *Camephes* thus describes their complaint. τί ταῖς δυστήναις ἡμῖν ἀπρεπὲς οὕτως πέπρακται, &c. 'What have we poor 'Creatures done amiss to deserve this 'punishment, to minister to a cold and 'humed Body? Our Eyes shall no lon-'ger see the divine Souls, since they 'are now streightned within little 'Orbs and Humours. But as often 'as we shall look up to our Native 'Heaven we shall sigh; and some-'times we shall not be able to see so 'much as that. For we poor Crea-'tures are condemn'd, neither have 'we an absolute power of sight, but 'dependent upon the Light of the 'Sun. Distance of place intercepts 'our sight; and we shall hear our 'cognate fou's pittifully sighing in the 'air for want of our company. Now 'we are no company for them. Now 'instead of the high Arch of Heaven, 'our house must be the narrow com-'pass of an heart. O if any one would

loose

'looſe us, from what, to what would
'he tranſlate us! But thou O Lord, Fa-
'ther and Creator, who ſo eaſily neg-
'lects thy workmanſhip, ſet us ſome
'bounds, and vouchſafe to converſe
'with us tho never ſo little while we
'are here below. The ſouls Petitio-
ned Death as a ſolace of life, and ſince
'twas their doom to live in the body at
leaſt at length to die. Next to not
living at all, nothing was more deſi-
rable then to die ſpeedily. So far is
Death more eligible then life.

There is not one part of life deſi-
rable to a conſidering perſon, becauſe
there is not one part free from ſorrow
and diſſatisfaction. And therefore
as a Traveller tired with going up a
rough and ſteep Hill, is forc'd to ſtand
ſtill many times to recruit and take
breath, that he may with the more
eaſe perform the remainder of his
journey: So the Pilgrim-Soul in this
rough and uneven Life, wants the reſt

and

and pauſe of Death. whence ſhe may gather a new ſupply of ſtrength for the progreſs of Eternity. Our jaded Life will not carry us through in one continued courſe to Immortality. Such a long journey cannot be perform'd without reſting by the way. The Grave is our Inn, & from thence we ſet out for Immortality, Neither indeed can we ſtay ſo long till the pauſe of Death. We muſt have many intervals of reſt, as wearied Travailers which bait oft by the way and and defer not their refreſhments till they take up for all night. The importunity of our labours & troubles compel us to ſtop upon the Road before we take up our quarters in the Grave. What elſe are the conſtant returns of Sleep, but the pauſe and reparation of wearied and languiſhing life? So much is Death better than Life, that our Life is ſuſtain'd by Deaths; Our Immortality depends upon Death, and our ſtate of Mortality

upon

upon Sleep the Image and Shadow of it.

Now to compare Death with Life. If that be the repaſt of this, it will conſequently be pleaſant. Or altho it be not Sweet in it ſelf, yet the trouble of Life will make it ſo. Wearineſs prepares the pleaſure of reſt, and whatſoever ſucceeds Bitterneſs is Sweet. 'Twas well ſaid by *Charidemus* that Pleaſures and Grievances were linkt together in a Chain, interchangably ſucceeding one another, ſo that the ſucceding pleaſure would be proportionable to the proceding grievance. Now what greater grievi-ance then our Mortal Life, and conſequently what greater pleaſere then Death? *Phalaris* ſaid that Life is therefore pleaſant becauſe we know of no greater evil then Death. But he ſpeaks the Senſe of the vulgar, and yet to the diſcredit of Life too, ſince it muſt be beholding to an evil to re-

commend it. I ſhould rather have ſaid. That Death ought to be thought pleaſant becauſe there is no greater evill then Life. And yet we are flatter'd on by the emergent happineſs of ſome men. But why do we look upon thoſe who have eſcaped ſhipwrack? We ſhould rather conſider thoſe that are drown'd. Theſe are innumerable, and yet are thought few, becauſe they don't appear.

Let not now the Tears ſhed at Funerals be alleadg'd againſt what has been ſaid. This depends all upon the opinion of the vulgar. And indeed every one laments rather himſelf, then him whom he call's dead. I ſay do not alleadg the Tears of others, you may your own. 'Tis a mans own thinking which makes him either happy or miſerable. What argument is it for the preference of Life before Death, that others weep when you die, if when you are born you your ſelf weep? 'Tis a folly

folly to rate our miseries by other mens opinions. Contrary circumstances attend our Death and Nativity. At the Birth of a man others rejoice, but he himself weeps, at his Death others weep, but he will rejoice, unless his Death be imbitter'd by an ill Life. Neither are we to think this gladness the less, because calm and inward, and not so obvious to the sense. The Infant that wept at his Birth, by sleep learns to smile says St. *Austin*. He dedicates the Image of Death, with a smile, who begins his Life with Tears. A notable presage of the miseries of Life, and of the happiness after Death. Weeping is natural, we need no teaching to dissolve in Tears; joy is a difficult Lesson, slowly learnt, and not without Discipline. 'Tis one of the precepts of *Seneca*, learn to rejoyce. Sleep gives us a sip of joy, but Death the full draught. Greif and Misery are Natural and Born with us, but joy advances more leasurely. For

if

we may credit *Avicenna*, the Infant has no ſenſe of joy till after the Fortieth day. The reaſon therefore why others weep at thy Death is becauſe they never made trial of it, and the reaſon why they rejoice at thy Birth, is becauſe they are not to live your life. You alone, who can beſt preſage human condition, refuſe it with Tears, which are the language of unwilling nature.

And as the Ceremonies of our Birth are contrary to thoſe of our Death, ſo is the condition of the one contrary to that of the other. Death either inverts or reſtores all things. Or rather reſtores by inverſion. For the inverſion of things that are upſide down, is the way to ſet them right. 'Twas a Funeral Ceremony in uſe among the *Tabitenſes* to turn their garments inſide outward. Death it ſelf is term'd a change, and 'tis our laſt and greateſt, for all beyond it is a State unchangeable. The change

change is from confinement to liberty, from Time to Eternity, and (unless it be our own fault) from misery to happiness.

Fortune is commonly prefer'd before Life. How many are there who prodigally throw away their Lives in the pursuit of a Kingdom! But is there any proportion between Fortune and Happiness, between a speck of Ground, a Point, and the Kingdom of Heaven? Death adds so much to our happiness as it cuts off from our Life. Before present admission into Heaven was procured, long Life was proposed as a reward to the good Patriarchs; but now when there is an immediate access to the joys of Heaven

We falsly think it due unto our friends,
That we should greive at their untimely ends,
'Tis envy now to mourn their early fate,
He only dyes untimely, who dyes late.

And

And yet we are not sufficiently in-amour'd with those Glories which Death leads us to. Sometimes we cast some faint longings that way, and tho oppressed with miseries, are not yet enough desirous to be rid of them. The miseries of Life make us wish for Death, but yet

Distrust and darkness of a future State
Make poor mankind still fearful of their fate
Death in it self is nothing, but we fear
To be we know not what, we know not where.

We would sometimes be dead, but are unwilling to die. Or if under the pressure of some Pungent calamitie we passionately court Death, the Fit is no sooner over, but we repent of our best Wish, like the Man in the Apologue, who languishing under his burthen threw it down and invoked Death, but when it came and demanded his business he told it 'twas to help him up with his burthen.

So

So apt are those to hug their miſe
ries who hope for better exchange
We are tired with out Toil and La
bour, and yet we reſume the burthen

What Hungry man that ſtood on
barren bank, where there was n
hope to relieve his Appetite, an
ſaw at the other ſide of the Rive
Trees laden with delicious Fruit
would be grived to hear of a Brid
or be afraid to be row'd over in
Boat, chuſing to ſtarve on the bank
then hazard himſelf on the River
O the unaccountable folly of Men
We commit our ſelves to the perfid
ous Ocean inqueſt of Gold, which lie
at the Suburbs of Hell and yet we ar
loth to be Tranſported into our Ce
leſtial Country, to the Glories of e
ternity. Supoſe there were no ne
ceſſity of dying, but that every on
had the diſpoſal of his own deſtinie
yet he were a fool who would no
hazard the attainment of felicity b

Fear

Death, and had rather live alwaies in a ſtate of miſerie then by dying to end it. 'Tis a great folly to fear that which we would wiſh for, were there no ſuch thing. Much more then ſhould we bear Death patiently now 'tis neceſſary. The popular argument why Death ought to be born patiently is becauſe 'tis a neceſſary evil. Here is a true conſequent but a falſ principle. For rather Death is a neceſſary good. However if an evil, requires patience on the Score of neceſſity, much more does a neceſſary good. Death as good, calls for our joy, as neceſſary for our ſubmiſſion. That is certainly a very great good which puts us out of the reach of miſerie, which frees the Captive without a Fee, which reſtores the Exile to his Country, without fear of returne, which ſets at liberty the Slave, without the conſent of his Maſter, which cures the Sick, without a bitter Potion, which redreſſes all the defects of

fortune, and unequal dispensations of providence. 'Twould have been a less errour if they had drawn an argument from necessitie to bear Life patiently, for that more deserves the name of a necessary evil. For 'tis that which thrust you into evil without your election, and then Wheedles you into evil with your own Consent. 'Twas cunningly coutriv'd by Nature that Souls should be unknowingly Immers'd in the Body, and cast blindfold into such a sordid Dungeon. For who that is in his right will, at the last Gasp, would if he might reenter the Prison of his Mothers Womb, be nourished with filth, be deprived of light so many Months, and of sense so many years; run again the gandelope of Fortune, resume the senslesness of Infancy, the Fears of Child-hood, the Dangers of Youth, the Cares of man-hood and the Infirmities of Old age? I believe never any man had a life so happy, as

to

to be willing to live it over again: Certainly if Life were offerd to us without the condition of Death, what ever Happineſs it promiſed elſe, it were to be refuſed.

The likeneſs that is between Death and Good, is enough to take a way all Suſpition of its being evil. None live more happily thē thoſe who moſt reſemble the Dead. Death is the Idea and rule of the beſt Life. The greateſt perfection of Life is to imitate Death, as every Heroical Perſon does when he abſtracts his Mind from his Body, holds no commerce with his Senſes, and Weds himſelf to the Divinitie. On what account do you think 'tis that Sleep is often priviledgd with Viſions and Revelations? God Loves and Honours the Image of Death.

Ecſtacie and Abſtraction from Communication with the Bodie is one of the waies of Oracle, & I Prophecie. The Mind which is diſengaged from

the Senſes is the more capable of Divine infuſions.

Beſides what is Philoſophy but the meditation of Death? And why not? Since the fruit of Philoſophie is vertue, and vertue is the imitation, or incoation of Death. 'Tis the principal artifice of Philoſophie to make Life pleaſant by the imitation of Death, and Death by conformity of Life. The moral Death ſmooths the paſſage for the natural. The ſeparation of Soul and Bodie is intolerable to him who has not diſengaged himſelf from his paſſions, but muſt ſwallow down the bitter Potion of Death all together. Our very Meat would Choak us if we did not Mince and Chew it, and Eat it peice by peice. Death if taken by degrees will be guſtful and wholeſome; if we lop of one Paſſion to daie, an other to morrow. Therea teſt weight is portable, if born by parts. Philoſophy is an anti-

cipation

tion of Death which by daily Subſtractions leſſens its weight. What wonder is it, if Death be inſupportable to him who under goes a great many Deaths in one? The loſs of one thing as of Honour, Pleaſure, or a Friend, is enough many times to wound us to the Heart, what a Grief will it then be to looſe all our Life in one moment? And therefore the Soul of a Wiſe man diſengages it ſelf from the Bodie by degrees, that it may converſe with it ſelf and God. She finds that ſhe reaſons more clearly, when withdrawn from the hurry of the Senſes, and that ſhe muſt retire a while from the Contagion of the Fleſh, if ſhe will ſpeculate a refined truth. Truth is a pure thing and cannot be beheld but by a clarified and ſpiritualized Sight.

Therefore the whole ſtudie of vertue conſiſts in a ſeparation of the Soul from the Bodie, and in near approaches to Death, whieh for that very

ſon it loves, or at leaſt leſs fears. How can he fear Death, who by dying lived well? Who diveſted himſelf of more then Death can? Who has already drained all its force? Will he, who all his Life time endeavored to Sequeſter himſelf from his Bodie, draw back when he is juſt about compleatly to enjoy his Wiſh? No Man will be troubled if what he hath a long time been labouring in vain to effect, be at laſt done by another, Nature finiſhes that by Death which vertue had begun in Life.

The affinity between Death and Vertue may be farther illuſtrated from the exhibition of honour. For as vertue becomes Majeſtick from the reſemblance it has of Death, ſo it commands reverance to be given to others as Death does. What can be more venerable then that for whoſe ſake the moſt Wicked are not evil ſpoken off. For as ill Men for the very

very awe and honour of Vertue will not own them ſelves ſo; aſſuming to themſelves ſome imaginarie excellencie, ſo for the reverence of Death we ſpare thoſe that have been evil, nay ſcarce ever name them without ſome commendation. So venerable is Death that it procures reſpect to the moſt contemptible. We are apt to praiſe him when dead, whom we envied when a live. according to that of *Minermus* Δεινοὶ γὰρ ἀνδρὶ πάντες ἐς μὲν εὐκλεεῖ Ζῶντι, φθονήσαι· Κατθανόντα δ' αἰνέσαι. Envy ſtops ſhort of this ſide of the Grave Every one ſpeaks honorably of the dead. And what do you think is the ground of this eſteem? 'Tis the current Philoſophie even among the Vulgar to take them for happy which are exempted from the calamities of this Life. And all happineſs is honorable. Neither is this honour given to the Soul only, but alſo to the Bodie, tho now under the moſt vile circumſtances. How awful is the ſight

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of a Coffin! With what Majestie does it ly! What lectures of Morality does it suggest! We are not so composed in the presence of a King, as at the Sight of a Corps. Nay 'tis not only Venerable but Sacred; The Honour of Burial is become a part of Religion.

Another reason of the Goodness of Death, may be taken from the wholsome influence it has on our Lives. The Death of others profits us who see it, and our own profits them that Celebrate it. And certainly the best Philosophie is, to season our whole Lives with the meditation of Death. And therefore to this end Nature supplies us every Moment with Emblems of Death. The Cheifest of which is Respiration. We live by little Essays of Death, and Retain our Spirit by continual emissions of it. Nay that which most of all displeases us in Death, the certainty of the

the thing, and the uncertainty of time, and manner, is of great use to us. I take this mixture of certainty and uncertainty to be one of the most ingenious Stratagems (I may so speak) of divine providence for the goverment of Man-kind. God would have us alwaies good, and consequently alwaies uncertain of certain Death. So that hereby Care is taken that the lateness of Death may not be an inducement to security, nor the suddainness to despair of reformation. But that the possibility of each may make Men careful, but not desperate. The possibility of a speedy Death allievates the labours of Life, and prevents the delayes of vertue. For if a Man would be troubled if he knew he had but one Month more to live, how dares he laugh and neglect his duty, who knows not whether there remains a day, an hour? The World was never more vitious then when Men were longest lived. Then 'twas

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that nature required an expiation by Waters. And therefore I think *Theophraſtus*, was very unreaſonable to complain of nature becauſe ſhe had granted to ſome Brutes, a leaſe of Life for above Five Hundred years, whereas the Life of man the moſt excellent of all her works was ſo brittle and ſhort. He erred both in his deſire and in his judgment. 1 For wiſhing for ſo many years, and 2 For thinking that Life whoſe meaſure is action and not daies, was to be reckoned by them. The time and manner of our Birth have ſome certainty, but there is no ſet manner of dying.

'Twas a Favour to ſet open more paſſages for a flight from, then for an entrance into evils. 'Tis therefore poſſible you may die at all times, that ſhould live well at all times, that you ſhould not live in that State which you wou'd be affraid to die in.

The easiness or frequent contingency of Death is no small commendation of it. Our Body and Soul are ill match'd they are so easily divorc'd. There is no creature of so frail a constitution as man. He falls by the least accident, and shakes off his ill-suted Body. *Fabius*, was choaked with an Hair, *Anacreon*, with a Grape-stone. *Baptista Mirandulous*, died of the very fancy of a Wound. Honour kill'd *Clidemus*, exultation of Spirit *Diagoras*, Laughter *Philemon*. Life is so frail a possession, there is no need of violence, the very blandishments are enough to shake it. We receive our Life through difficulties, enjoy it with difficulty, and keep it precariously. Any one may deprive us of Life, but no body can keep Death from us. That's as free to a Slave as to a Prince. The Emperor *Leo* imposed a Tax upon Births, but never was such a Burthen put upon Death; The Infant was tax'd at his entrance into

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the world, but 'twas ever free to die.

Do you lament the unseasonableness of Death? All Death is seasonable to every age. It rescues Old age from misery, Youth from vice, and Infancy from both. It gathers old men as ripe, turns the Blossom of youth into Fruit, and compendiously ripens infancy. If thy Death could be put off a little longer, what advantage will it be in thy accounts of nature or happiness? They that 3000 years agon died unwillingly, and stopped Death Two daies or a Week, what is their gain? Where is that Week? And yet poor spirited Mortals use arts of protraction, like the miserable Sinners at *Noah's* Flood: The waters drove them out of their lower Rooms, then they crept up to the Roof, having lasted half a day longer, they knew not how to get down. Some crept up to the top branch of a Tree, some climb'd up to a Mountain, and linger'd

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it may be Three daies longer. But all that while they endured a worse torment then Death; They lived with amazement, distracted with the ruines of mankind, and the horrour of their own approaching Death.

Another thing which commends Death is, that it cannot be repeated. Tho some think that an unhappiness, hoping to mend that in the second Death, which went amiss in the first. All other afflictions are not so civil and courteous. They are importunate in their visits, come and go a Thousand times over. Death will not be troublesom, comes but once. But why would you have it repeated? To know by experience what 'tis to dy? Neither do you want that conveniency. The fates are ingeniously contrived. Tho Death comes but once; yet it does not come all at once. It insinuates it self by degrees, makes several preliminary Essays. Childhood

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Death of Infancy, Youth the Death of Childhood, Manhood of youth, old age of manhood. The last Moment is but the consummation of what the first began. You may know Death by her retinue, shedding of Teeth, trembling of Joynts, grey Hair, baldness &c. You cannot live a day without the tast of it. All succession of time, all the changes in nature, all varieties of light and darkness, every creature does preach our Funeral Sermon, and calls us to look and see how the old Sexton time throws up the Earth, and digs a Grave, where we must lay our sins or our sorrows. Sleep which is the Image of Death we daily experiment. Wee desire it, we are refresh'd by it, 'tis the end of our labours, the deposition of our cares, the reparation of the man. Now the Image is never so excellent as the Prototype. If we love the shadow, why do we hate the substance? Nature intended Death as the comfort and

ſupport of Life, and therefore leaſt the delay of ſo great a good ſhould make us impatient, has left us its image to ſolace our ſelves withall for the perſent.

But ſuppoſe after all this, that all Death were evil and dreadful. Why then do we not care for that which we profeſs we fear? Why do we neglect that which we do not contemn? If it be evil, why don't we prepare for it? We make proviſion againſt other dangers tho contingent; we arm our ſelves againſt Caſualties. Why do we not make preparation againſt that which we know to be neceſſary? There is a great difference betwixt contempt and neglect of Death. None provide more againſt it, then thoſe who contemn it; none fear it more then thoſe who neglect it; and what is more ſtrange don't only therefore fear it, becauſe they have neglected it, but neglect it even while they fear it. Who would

would think it possible that Men could be guilty of such incomparable Sottishness, who know that the only Security of Life is the assurance of an happy death, and that the only assurance of an happy Death, is the testimonie of a good Life.

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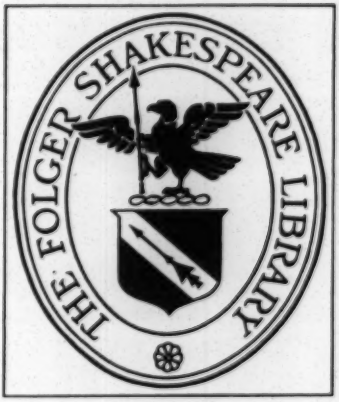
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